

Honoring All Who Served

STATE SENATOR

Valde
Garcia

Serving the
22nd District



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Dear Veteran:

Whether in quiet reflection or public ceremony, this month we pause to remember and honor the sacrifices of America's true heroes – our nation's servicemen and women. As citizens of the world's greatest democracy, we owe our very freedom to those who have demonstrated their love of country through a willingness to serve. I am proud to join with many others across Michigan in saying with gratitude and respect: **Thank you for your service.**

As your link to state government, I also want to share some legislative news and information that may be helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to call toll-free at (800) 516-0026 with any questions or concerns, or if you need assistance with any state agency.

Sincerely,

Valde Garcia

Valde Garcia
State Senator

Resources for Veterans on the Web

- Find the latest information on veteran's benefits and assistance at the United States Department of Veterans Affairs web site, www.va.gov, or call 1-800-827-1000.
- Keep up-to-date on state homeland security issues at www.michigan.gov/homeland.
- Visit www.michigan.gov/cis to access comprehensive employment assistance. Click on Agencies and Commissions to find Veterans Services. Along with information on career and education opportunities, the site includes a link to the new federal "Hire Vets First" web site.

Military Relief Fund to Aid Families

Families of members of the Michigan National Guard or the United States Armed Forces Reserves who are serving in the war on terrorism may soon qualify for special assistance in times of need. Recently enacted legislation establishes the Military Family Relief Fund to provide additional help with clothing, food, housing, utilities, medical services and other related necessities of daily living to the families of these service members.

Taxpayers can donate to the fund through an income tax check-off beginning with the 2004 tax forms. Eighty percent of the donations will be credited to the fund while twenty percent will be provided to Michigan's veterans' homes. Families will be able to apply for assistance through the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs. Contributing to the fund is one way we can thank our Michigan citizen-soldiers who do so much to keep our families and communities safe and secure.



2004 Memorial Day Service

Senator Garcia joined with his colleagues as the Michigan Senate opened session on Thursday, May 27 with a solemn tribute to our nation's fallen soldiers. For the tenth straight year, this special Senate Memorial Day observance honored those who sacrificed their lives in the defense of freedom.

Military Hunting and Fishing License

Active duty Michigan servicemen and women who are stationed out-of-state will now find it easier to obtain discounted hunting and fishing licenses while home on leave. Effective October 1, these special \$1 military licenses can now be purchased through more than 1,700 license vendors statewide upon presentation of leave papers and proof of military status. The licenses are valid for up to two weeks. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/dnr. Type in the key word - Military License. On a related note, Senate Bill 1148, which recently passed the Senate, would expand the discounted license program to members of the Reserves and National Guard who have been called to active duty and are stationed outside of the state.

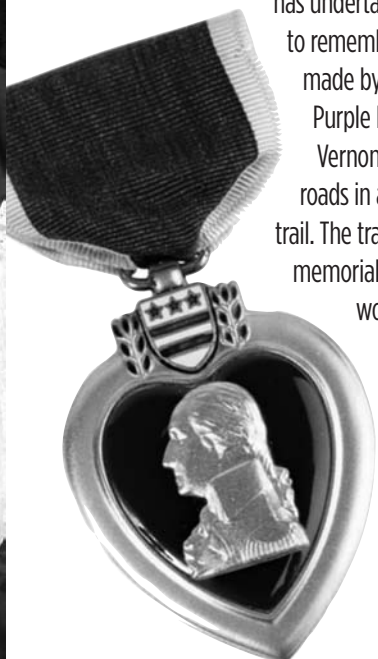
License Plates Support the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Citizens across Michigan have provided much needed support for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial through the purchase of Veterans Memorial specialty license plates. Since the program began in 2001, over 5100 of the plates bearing silver dog tags and the somber reminder "Lest We Forget" have been sold, raising over \$186,000. This plate is available by mail or fax, or at any Secretary of State branch office. The fee is \$35 in addition to the annual registration fee. Twenty-five dollars of this cost supports the Memorial as well as ten dollars of the renewal fee. In addition, veterans can apply for their military service branch plate at the local Secretary of State office. Information on both the specialty license plate and the military service plates is available at www.michigan.gov/sos. Type in the key word - License Plate Store.



Purple Heart Trail

Senate legislation passed this fall that designates the portion of I-69 in Branch County as the Purple Heart Trail. Under Senate Bill 1243, this section of the interstate would be part of efforts to establish a nationwide Purple Heart Trail. The Military Order of the Purple Heart has undertaken the trail project as a way to remember and honor the sacrifices made by our veterans in combat. The Purple Heart Trail begins near Mt. Vernon with a plan to designate roads in all 50 states as part of the trail. The trail will be a very visible memorial to those who have been wounded or died for our country. The legislation has been sent to the House for consideration.



The Michigan's Veterans Memorial

The Michigan Veterans Memorial frames the northeast corner of the Capitol complex. This imposing memorial honors the sacrifices of the more than 1.3 million Michigan veterans of World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund

This fall, the Michigan Legislature took an important step to shore up the state Veterans Trust Fund as legislators vowed to find a new source of revenue for the Veterans' Survivor Tuition Program in the 2004-05 budget. The move would ensure Trust Fund revenue would only be used for its original purpose - to provide temporary emergency assistance to Michigan wartime veterans. Veterans who have risked their lives for our country need to know they can count on a fiscally healthy Michigan Veterans Trust Fund for emergencies or hardships. If you would like to keep updated on this issue, please contact my office toll-free at (800) 516-0026.